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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

WE once heard it pronounced from the pulpit, that Christianity, like its author, had been crucified between two thieves, Bigo-

try and Intolerance. Looking back to some late events, we may venture to say, that Patriotism, the most important duty of man next to religion,

has suffered a similar fate, between apostacy and apathy. We were deploring the situation of a country, thus abandoned in its utmost need, by those fed through its bounty, when we thought we heard some whispering behind us, and on looking back, we discovered that the sound proceeded from a figure, whose form or lineaments we could not describe, enveloped as it was in a black cowl, or mysterious mantle thrown over it, from which issued a small thin voice, but whether that of a female, or of a man advanced in years, could not well be ascertained. In a low tremulous tone it delivered its sentiments:

"There are mysteries in government, as well as in religion. By these, and these only, in such perilous times, can the monarchy be saved. One of these state secrets is, that the Sovereign and the Prince, *while Prince*, ought always to be of opposite political sentiments. The latter is to set himself at the head of the opposition party. *All* the talents, all the great families, all the influential property and personality of the kingdom are thus brought under the cognizance, the inspection, the guidance and controul of some part of the reigning family. The country-party is as much under this subservience as the court-party, the Whig denomination as much as the Tory. Then happens this most desirable result, that the party vulgarly called and supposed patriotic, under such guidance and heading, never can step beyond a certain line. They can indeed exhibit to the people a few popular topics, calculated to preserve their reputation, but never, in the smallest degree, to effect the preponderating balance of the monarchy, or the settled influence of the crown. The people are always kept in spirits by a confidence in the party, which is itself completely restricted by its very organization;

and the whole population goes on from year to year, from lustrum to lustrum, never gaining any thing, and always expecting much. Should the personal liking go along with the mere professional or official attachment, so much the better and easier will the chief of the party appear in the part he has to perform. He will take hold of Erskine with one hand, and Fox with the other; Sheridan will shine with reflected light at the foot of the festive table, and all the party will be held in pleasing captivity by the fascination of easy and agreeable manners. But as *etiquette* did not suffer the attendance of the Prince at the funeral of his dear and honoured friend, (perhaps indeed he might have muffled himself in a cloak, and mixed in the crowd that followed the hal-lowed hearse,) so the far superior obligation of family connexion, will never permit him to sanction the party in any reform, which by the many would be called radical, but in the estimation of him who *holds the clue*, would, as certainly, be deemed revolutionary.

"But when the Prince becomes King, or what amounts to the same, unrestricted Regent, he is prepared to adopt a character and conduct in politics totally different, yet in a proper view of things, in all their bearings, by no means inconsistent. His conduct is not to be judged of as that of a private man. He has now great and weighty duties to perform, to adopt that line of conduct which his father pursued with such inflexible perseverance, and which is absolutely necessary to preserve unshaken the alliance of Church and State. He would wish to retain his former friends as *personal* ones, as pleasant companions, and even to gratify them with favours; but if ribbands and garters will not content them, he can by no means sacrifice the intimate interests of the

crown, by admitting such men into his political confidence in the new character he has to support.

"The people of England are a Tory community. Mr. Perceval represents the sense of the Laity, and Lord Sidmouth of the Hierarchy. The dissenting interests have not intrinsic importance, whatever bustle they may make in the public prints; they serve to prop up an opposition party, but they signify little in counteracting, with any effect, the square and sound-set basis of the establishment, the consolidation of church and state. Is the care of this paladium to be entrusted to such men as Lord Erskine, a Scotchman; or to Lord Moira, and Brinsley Sheridan, Irishmen; or to Sir Samuel Romilly, of foreign extraction; or to Lords Grey and Grenville, who are for unconditional surrender to the Catholic church. An opposition party is however still wanted. When the Prince Regent finds it necessary to conform to the politics of a Sovereign, another head will be given to the now scattered members of opposition. The Princess Charlotte, or perhaps Prince William of Gloucester, will occupy the situation now vacated, but too important not to be speedily and suitably filled.

"Catholic emancipation *never* can be granted consistent with the safety of the establishment, and the security of the monarchy. A reform in Parliament is equally contrary to the interests of both. The Prince, now become Sovereign, is, by this time, fully informed upon this subject, and completely initiated into the true interests of the monarchy, and the saving mysteries of the state. It is the hierarchy of the church which is the great buttress of the state, and neither of these can be altered in any important article, for if change once takes place, both will be endangered. Like some of those

massy walls in ancient towers, where the mortar is consolidated, in a long process of time, with the stone of the building; when it falls, it will fall *all together*, without the smallest disruption. Whenever there is a change in the liturgy, there may then happen a change in the legislature, but not till then. The triple compact of hierarchy, monarchy, and aristocracy, or rather oligarchy, forms the cable which holds the British government, and makes it ride in safety, through all the turbulence of seditious sects, and even in the tempest of the present times. Some indeed may say, that the plume of the Prince resembles the white plume of the great Henry IV. of France, which, in battle, was always seen moving to and fro *amidst the ranks of the enemy*; but this is nothing less than slander, for the Prince of Wales is now in his proper place, and can make the due and constitutional distinction between his personal and his political friends. What name he shall acquire in the page of history is yet to be known. Lewis the *Just*, of France, was so named from being *born* under the sign of the *Balance*. It is not to be doubted, that George the IV., in his care of the *whole* constitution, always including the Church with the State, and giving the former its just precedence, will be denominated, the pious the provident, and the patriotic. The sectaries in religion, and the partizans in politics, will, no doubt, be disappointed; but the genius and the vigour of Mr. Pitt will revive in his successor, and we shall secure the identity of the constitution, and the integrity of the empire."

"Our Church is built on Truth's firm rock,
And mocks each sacriligious hand;
In spite of each electric shock,
The Heav'n-defended steeples stand."—

Thus whispered the voice! and we

listened in silence. Confounded, if not convinced, and confirmed in our despair of either Catholic emancipation, or reform in Parliament!

No circumstance more clearly manifests the distress of our commercial and manufacturing interests, and the stagnation of the natural circulating system by the continental exclusion, than the eagerness with which a credulous public contemplates the discontinuance of the East India Charter. Never was there a more credulous and cullible public. There is a credulity, from knowing *much*, founded on a consciousness of how much more remains to be known; and there is a credulity of positive ignorance which supplies an ample fund for the purposes of quacks in all professions. A very little thing will captivate a whole nation into a firm belief of the necessity of a war which is notoriously detrimental to the public welfare; and as soon as they are beginning to grow somewhat sensible of the tremendous truth, their fancies, with their feelings, are easily transferred to some glittering object, which, for the time, does all that is wanted, by suspending every other consideration. We cannot help thinking, that government, on this account, not unwillingly, accedes to this lure of speculation, in order to compensate, in a degree, for much practical distress and disappointment. The gnawing discontent and dissatisfaction pervading the whole empire is thus for a time assuaged. The tub is cast overboard, and the Whale tumbles after it. Buenos-Ayres rises again in Bengal, and with twenty millions of waste acres in England, the people are to send out adventures to the East-Indies.

A man half-famished falls asleep. The scene is instantly changed. He is seated at a table, covered with the most delicious dainties. Pactolus

(the Regents Canal) runs from one end of the table to the other, well stocked with Golden fishes. Potosi glitters on the side-board. Sirloins smoke, Pastry puffs, and Pheasants keep crying, come eat me. The dreamer opens his jaws rather widely, and then suddenly awakens with a large mouthful of moon-shine. Pactolus becomes an earthen porringer of cold water, and Potosi a great pile of waste paper.

It is thus, we think, that the nation is all agape with this "Eldorado" of the East: but then the whole business will *occupy* parliament; it will draw the attention of the people; and the opiate of the Indies will for a time deaden hunger, and even exhilarate the gloomiest imagination. Thus the war will still proceed merrily along, to the great satisfaction of the thousands of thousands, whose livelihood depends upon its prolongation. The merchants and traders of Greenock, in their resolutions on the East-India charter, say that *they feel their patriotism, if possible! grow stronger*, because they can venture to discern *new resources to support the war viz.* by an extension of the charter of the company. This is, we suppose, a way of bribing the ministry to the measure; but if these patriotic Scotchmen wait for the means of carrying on the war, by the success of private adventures to India, the war will last, and their patience must last, for a long period of years.

We believe that government and the company have been too long acquainted, not to understand each other perfectly. It may be *agreed* in some particulars to *differ*; but the directors laugh in their sleeve at the private speculation, which the ministry indulges, to keep the nation in good humour. Yet, although private adventurers, even those of Liverpool, Bristol, and Manchester,

will, for some time, dash themselves to pieces against the capital, the long experience, the wide spread influence, the mercantile manoeuvres of the company; although the means of carrying on the war be vainly sought for in this circuitous direction, yet the present exigencies of the empire will finally lead to the ruin of monopoly. The mercantile system is about to suffer a great change in its principles and in its practice. Commerce, which (if we dare venture the word) is of a nature truly republican, and which from different reasons verged into oligarchical monopoly, will revert to its original principles, and freedom of trade will precede, and perhaps, at length produce political freedom. The principles of political, and of domestic economy are in reality the same, and it will be the useful lesson of adversity, that as little obstruction as possible ought in future to be given to the natural progress of individual industry, to the unceasing desire of benefiting ourselves, and to the self-rectifying balance of reciprocal utility. The great commercial character which recognizes not only the right of property, but the power of using it in free circulation and general distribution throughout the market of the world, will again be recognized. Exclusive charters made only for particular seasons, but which are, in reality, kept locked up, long after their primary destination, for the purposes of facilitating political influence, will be opened by the master key of "*Laissez faire, et Laissez passer.*"

The great Locksmith that has made and used this key, is the United States of America. Gama and Columbus discovered the eastern and western worlds; but in vain. Bigotry and monopoly have, ever since, been laid like vast booms across these great continents, these vast

capacities for human industry and enterprize. The man of all this globe who joined the sublimest speculation with the most heroic action, was sent home in chains after having given to Castile and Arragon another world. That world has been used like its great discoverer. It has been kept in chains, what matter whether made of gold or iron. The jealous and envious soul of Ferdinand was sent down through the line of Spanish monarchs, in a spirit of selfish monopoly, that contrived every means of hiding one quarter of the globe from the rest of mankind, and, as it were, to bury it again in the tomb of Columbus. The independence of the Anglo-American colonies has been the germinating seed, and from the tree it has produced, the same seed is wafted by the favouring winds of Heaven over the whole continent of South America. In like manner, the same spirit of enterprize uncontrolled by monopoly, unrestricted by political subordination, has found its way to the eastern world, to China, and to the Indian Peninsula. American freedom of trade has gone before and taught us the value of exclusive charters, of exclusive politics, and of exclusive religion.

"In the physical as in the modern world," says the learned and liberal Humboldt, "every thing terminates in a return to the order prescribed by nature, and if small islands of which the population was exterminated, carried on a more active trade with their productions, than the neighbouring continent, it is only because the inhabitants of Cumana, Caracca, New Grenada, and Mexico, begun very late to profit by the immense advantages derived to them from nature. But roused from a lethargy of ages, freed from the shackles which a false policy imposed on the progress of agriculture, the Spa-

nish colonies of the continent will gradually take possession of the different branches of the West-India trade. This change will have the most fortunate issue in the diminution of the slave-trade, and suffering humanity will owe to the natural progress of things, what we had a right to expect from the wisdom of European governments."

And with respect to the eastern world, he observes that "ten years ago the Bengal sugar was as little known in the great market of Europe as the sugar of New-Spain, and now both of these compete with the sugar of the West India islands. The great fertility of the soil and the immense population, gave such great advantages to Bengal over every other country of the globe, that the sugar exported from Calcutta after a passage of 5200 leagues, is still lower at *New-York*, than the Jamaica sugar which comes only a distance of 860 leagues. The wages of labour are so low in the East, and high in the West, added to which, the sugar of Hindostan is manufactured by free hands, while in the West Indies the maintenance of a slave is greatly more expensive. In short, the produce of the soil is twice as great as that of the West Indies, while the price of a free Indian is almost three times less than that of a negro slave in the Island of Cuba." Thus, in spite of monopoly, which strives to dam up the products of human labour for partial emolument, there will happen a free circulation, a general distribution, a free and open market, obtained by the instrumentality of unrestricted and unchartered communities, and political economy, will have its principles, so well laid down in the books of philosophers, put into practice for the prosperity and happiness of nations.

To be sensible of disease, frequently leads to seek a remedy, and to see

the people generally interested in the present situation of affairs, would be a good symptom. But the many are insensible to their state, and are completely lulled into apathy.

The periodical press contributes a large share to the popular delusion. In most cases, when it is not directly purchased, it timidly shrinks from the discharge of the duty of letting the whole truth be known, and readers unaccustomed to reflect, and who merely form their political opinions on the papers of the day, are but little acquainted with the real and alarming state of things, and receive little more than accounts on one side of the question. While the people, habituated to such statements, have lost their relish for bold substantial truths, and are well pleased to be kept in the dark, readers and writers, by a mutual reaction, contribute to keep up the delusion. The people like to be duped, and venal editors gratify them in their errors. But in some cases, public spirit breaks forth, and the Common Hall and Common Council of London, in their resolutions and petitions* to the Regent, speak a language worthy of enlightened senates, if it were the fashion of senates to use the accents of freemen. But large majorities in favour of the minister of the day, and loud cheerings accompanying him through his sophistical and illiberal speeches more generally characterize modern proceedings. Such things, as the necessary effects of certain causes, must continue to operate, till the voice of the people is heard in a more full and effectual manner, in consequence of an amended representation in the popular branch of the legislature.

We are told the Regent does not

* See the Documents, where they are placed to prove, by future reference, that in 1812, public spirit is not totally fled from the land.

read newspapers. Perhaps the courtly pages of the *Morning Post*, or some other favoured paper, may be excepted. This is prudent. For low as the state of the periodical press is, some unpleasant truths might happen to glance athwart the gloom, and men who give cause for severity of remark, afraid to meet with it, act with prudent caution to keep out of the way of seeing an account of public proceedings; lest plain remarks, in the simple narration of facts, should carry their own comment so strongly impressed, that the truth of historical relation, even without an intention of direct censure, might be construed as a libel, or by the force of conscience, be viewed as a just, although undesigned sarcasm.

The famous Baron Geramb, is removed from England, under the operation of the alien act. Alas! for this patron of whiskers, and of foppery. Although not desirous "to break a butterfly upon the wheel," we cannot notice the introduction of such fopperies into private life, and into the army, through the patronage of princes, and the companions of princes, without indignantly feeling the prevailing corruption of manners, causing this man to be patronized, who was only turned off, when his demands for the reward of his mighty merits became too importunate for his patrons.

Shall we attribute the Knighthood of Sir Humphry Davy, to the laudable patronage of the great, extended to scientific knowledge, or to the effusions of personal vanity seeking rewards so uncongenial with the spirit of philosophy? It may be considered as another proof of the spirit of frivolity so characteristic of the age in which we live, when show and pomp are more highly estimated, than the substantial rewards which virtue confers on her unostentatious followers.

The conduct of the citizens of London forms a striking contrast to the proceedings of the Common Council of Dublin. They refused the civic honours to an officer who had distinguished himself in Portugal, because from the great O in his name, they feared he was guilty of not believing, as they believed, and they sent forward a solitary petition from Ireland against Catholic claims. In England only two petitions have yet been mustered up by the ralliers of bigotry and intolerance, and a majority of the resident members of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, who were yet strongly opposed, are the only petitioners on that side of the water to join the Common Council of Dublin.*

It affords a strong confirmation of the reiterated assertions in this Retrospect that the attempts to fix on the slight disturbances in the county of Down the stigma of proceeding from Catholic animosity, was the mere trick of their intolerant enemies to raise prejudices against them, and prevent the granting of their just claims, that Baron Smith who presided in the crown court at the late assizes for that county, declared that in the party feuds which had taken place, he perceived nothing of a systematic anti-protestant association. We glory in having refused our belief to the unfounded calumny, and in having discharged our duty in denouncing as a fiction of the opposite party the pretended oath of association.

The spirit of liberality slowly emerges, and corporate bodies retain their share perhaps longer than others. The trustees of Erasmus Smith's schools require that the teachers of the schools under their sys-

* The petition of the Dissenting Ministers of London and Westminster forms a good contrast. See their Resolutions among the Documents.

tem shall be protestants, and that the majority of children in their schools must be of the profession of Protestantism. The benefits of education to the bulk of our population will be much narrowed and the good to be expected from them greatly lessened by these restrictions. They have not yet determined whether they will permit the Lancasterian system to be introduced into their schools.

Riots on account of the high prices of provisions and want of employment have occurred in many parts of England, and as always happen in the case of mobs, many violent and injudicious acts, defeating their own purposes, have been perpetrated. But the disturbance at Manchester had a different character in some respects from those, which occurred in other places. One hundred and fifty-four men of that class removed from feeling the severity of the pressure of the times, and who in all countries when they themselves are snug, delight in proclaiming that *all is well*, sent a requisition to the Borough-reeve, to call a meeting to prepare an address of congratulation to the Prince Regent. A meeting was accordingly appointed, but the promoters of the measure finding the people were roused to opposition, declined to meet their opponents, and experience the disgrace of a defeat, although some of them afterwards met on a succeeding day, at the POLICE OFFICE, and passed a smuggled address. A copy of some of the hand bills published on the occasion will be found among the documents. The one against the meeting appears to have nothing improperly inflammatory in it, while the counter one discovers a most reprehensible spirit of bigotry rousing to religious frenzy in accordance with the spirit of the minister. The working classes being assembled in opposition to the measure of a

congratulatory address finding the supporters of it, dare not meet them on the fair grounds of argument or of numbers, did not possess sufficient coolness to enjoy their legitimate triumph of reading and adopting the resolutions of the Livery of London, but proceeded to unjustifiable acts of violence in damaging the Exchange Rooms, the proposed place of meeting.

We are not advocates for rioting, for we believe violence almost always fails to produce good effects, and steady perseverance in opposition to wrong measures is far more efficacious. But let blame be impartially dispensed. While riots are condemned, let not those who cause them escape censure. It is easy for full men to enjoy life, and thank their patrons from whom they expect still more, but the bulk of the people are pressed down by the measures which have been pursued, and must there be no mitigation of harsh censure, if they sometimes express their feelings in an uncourtly strain? The addressers by proposing the meeting first, provoked opposition. Ministers and their abettors have brought much misery on the nation. They plead in their defence that their orders in council do not produce the present scarcity. In part however they do. They have irritated the Americans by them, and the intercourse is less free, than if the Americans did not hesitate to send their grain to Britain without fear of the consequences of a sudden rupture. War, the favourite measure of ministers, occasions a waste of food, and Portugal has greatly drained our supplies. Besides the orders in council have caused bad trade, and a consequent inability to purchase food at the present high prices, and thus fairly bear on the question of scarcity.

A club has been formed in London to promote the object of par-

liamentary reform. In honour of the venerable patriot, it is called THE HAMPDEN CLUB.

The resolutions will be found among the documents. We once had our Whig Club in the North of Ireland. Is there as much public spirit yet remaining, as to lead to the formation of a Hampden Club among us?

Petitions under the patronage of the persevering friend of civil and religious liberty, the Rev. Christopher Wyvill have been presented to both houses of parliament from several places in England, praying for the removal of all disabilities on account of religious opinions, and on broad comprehensive principles, embracing the cause of Catholics and Dissenters of every denomination.

The motion to enter into the consideration of the Catholic claims, has been negatived in both houses of Parliament. The minority in favour of the question has, since last year, acquired a considerable accession of strength, and the public sentiment, both in England and Ireland, is experiencing a rapid change to the side of liberality and justice. Little new occurred in the course of the debates; but the opposers of the measure affected to show greater moderation, than on former occasions. The cause is gaining ground.

Badajos is taken, with great loss on the part of the British and the allies, the French not being sufficiently strong to succour it, or perhaps prevented by want of provisions from attempting a battle for its relief. Notwithstanding any appearance of present temporary success, the policy of the war in the peninsula remains on the former grounds, and some are so firm, or so obstinate, as to see no cause to change their opinions, on the policy of wasting so much on an attempt in the end likely to prove unavailing.

In the north of Europe preparations for war are making, but events

have not fully declared themselves, as to the actual situation of the contending parties. The cordial friendship of Sweden for Britain is very doubtful, and it remains to be seen whether Russia will be forced to yield to the ascendancy of France by negotiation, or by arms. But in either case, the humiliation of Russia may be looked for, as being unable to cope with the artifice, or the force of France. A flag of truce is arrived, supposed to bring overtures of peace from France, but in the present situation of affairs, peace is not to be expected.

The dispute with the United States of North America is likely to be farther exasperated by the discovery of an agent employed by Sir James Craig, to tamper with some leading men of the Federalist party in Massachusetts to support a connection with Britain, to the separation of the Eastern from the other parts of the union. A message notifying the discovery of these intrigues, and conveying strong censure on the conduct of the British government has been sent by the President Madison to the senate and house of Representatives. The official note on the Orders in Council, just published by the British government, will not tend to promote reconciliation with America.

At page 291, will be found remarks censuring some observations on the conduct of Quakers, in relation to their not coming generally forward to sign the petition of the Protestants in favour of Catholic emancipation, published in the *Retrospect of Politics* in the 43d number. The writer appears to expect, that no remarks will at any time be inserted in the magazine, that would give offence to any. If this regulation were adopted, the work would indeed be miserably insipid, and the rights of free discussion, and of a

free press, would be sacrificed to a selfish desire to please. No! Such never has been our practice, and such we are determined it never shall be. It is the legitimate province of a free press, to let censure fall wherever it is deserved. We have cited in our pages before the tribunal of public opinion, several classes of the community, as impartiality and the cause of justice required, and shall Quakers be considered so privileged, and so *highly favoured*, as to expect to escape a lash, if they, by their conduct should on any occasion be found to deserve it? In the charge made against them in the present instance, let the public judge between them and their accuser. The writer of the note which gave the offence, retains the sentiments he formerly expressed in full force, and cannot admit the validity of the excuse, that the Quakers are right in declining all subjects which may lead to political controversy. Such timid conduct may be prudent, but it is not liberal. Instead of entering into a long discussion, let facts decide the controversy. If X.Y. can prove, by adducing their signatures, that many Quakers have signed the petition, or even that any one of their leading influential members has signed, then the writer of the note will, so far as these instances go, acknowledge his error; but if no such proof is brought forward, he will continue to withhold from the Quakers any praise for their liberality, and consider that they are actuated by a selfish, narrow, and exclusive spirit.

A correspondent has sent us the following letter:

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

AMIDST all the abuses, political, and moral, by which we are surrounded, it must prove a sensible

gratification, that the friends of religious toleration have engaged in their party all the talent that is free and honourable in the empire. The great cause of Catholic emancipation is become so popular too, that its enemies are ashamed in many places to avow their hostility. From this GOOD NAME, which the cause has now acquired, and the dishonour attached to the character of intolerance, we may predict with confidence the happiest results. Old prejudices will gradually wear away; new lights break in with the progress of information, and what men have been long accustomed to consider infamous, they will finally be brought about to resign altogether.

Yet are the disciples of bigotry still numerous, and still violent! Men who are not only leagued under mysterious oaths, in well known hostility to the religion and person of the Catholic, but whose persecuting spirit declares itself frequently in an open manner against him; braving at once the public authority that protects, and the public sentiment that pleads in his favour.

The communication from Tandragee,* which appeared in your last, may serve to illustrate this lamentable fact; and the following evidences, in a neighbouring quarter, of a corresponding spirit, must remove all doubt as to its existence and character. The *naked facts* should go before the public; and the independent press will not shrink from their exposure, though they should furnish a wretched *item* to the eloquent gentlemen of the Common Council, and swell the proof somewhat, that "all the Protestants of Ireland are not friendly to Catholic claims."

Lieutenant Hall, of the Lurgan yeomanry, was one of six or eight per-

* Orange Presbyterians!—Proh lugendum!!!